

# Exploring Point of View in the Novel

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

The novel makes use of many of the same **points of view** used by short story writers, as well as using other techniques that the more complex structure of the novel makes possible.

## THE BASIC POINTS OF VIEW IN FICTION

**Omniscient** The point of view is called "third person omniscient" if the author is an objective observer outside the story and presents the thoughts of all the characters involved.

**Limited** The point of view is called "third person limited" if the author tells the story from the viewpoint of just one character.

The point of view is called "first person limited" if a character narrates his or her own experience directly.

## ADDITIONAL POINT-OF-VIEW TECHNIQUES USED IN THE NOVEL

The novel has experimented with new varieties of point of view. The theme of relationship between observer and observed is an important consideration for modern novels.

**"Bird's-eye view"** This is really the same as "third person omniscient" described above, except that in the novel the effect of the detachment of the author is magnified. The greater scope of the novel allows the novelist using "bird's-eye view" to give the reader a sense of sweeping historical and geographic perspective, as the author-narrator moves at will from place to place and time to time. (This is the case in the sprawling novels of Charles Dickens such as *Great Expectations* or *David Copperfield*.)

**Multiple points of view** A narrative technique where the novel's story line is told in limited first person point of view as experienced by more than one character in the plot. (William Faulkner used this technique in many of his novels, including *As I Lay Dying* and *The Sound and the Fury*.)

**Stream of consciousness** Perhaps the most "intimate" point of view, stream of consciousness presents the actual thoughts going on inside the character's mind. It can be presented either as actual speech—called an "interior monologue"—or as random images and phrases which are even closer to how humans actually think. (James Joyce was an important developer of the stream of consciousness technique in much of his writing.)

## QUESTIONS TO ASK WHILE YOU ARE READING A NOVEL:

1. What basic points of view does the novelist use? What are the effects of using the points of view selected?
2. Does the novel make use of any of the advanced point of view techniques described? What are the effects of the novelist's use of these points of view?